

Veterans Committee Minutes
August 10, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Richardson; Committee Members Phil Barrett, Dick Lucia, Dan Pemrick, Mo Wright, Benny Zlotnick; Supervisors Eric Connolly, Tara Gaston, John Lant and Chairman of the Board Preston Allen; Chad Cooke, Matt Rose, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Frank McClement, Veterans.

Chairman Richardson called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Pemrick, seconded by Mr. Zlotnick, the minutes of the March 9, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. McClement distributed copies of the Veterans Service Agency Report and gave a brief overview. The report is attached to these minutes. Mr. McClement said that they are continuing to provide their services to Veterans and have upgraded their software to enable working remotely and over the phone with Veterans. Some distributions were made from the Trust fund. A \$750 allocation was authorized by Mr. Richardson to purchase food for food baskets and gift certificates for grocery stores, an allocation of \$2K to the Veterans Community Housing Coalition to aid in their food distribution efforts, and an allocation of \$5K for the Veterans office to purchase supplies such as paper towels and disinfecting wipes. With the \$5K allocation for the Veterans office, many products ended up being donated to the Agency. A donation of disinfecting wipes from the Hannaford Distribution Center and a large truckload of food from the Regional Food Bank. Therefore, only \$1,200 of the \$5K was spent to date. Mr. McClement read an email from Lisa Banden in Mental Health and Addiction regarding grant funding for the Peer to Peer program. NYS has held up a lot of grants and funding on a local level. If the 2020-2021 grant is frozen there will probably be nothing to roll to 2021. The expenditure though 6/30/20 is \$43,054 which leaves \$51,810 to spend from 7/1/2020 through 6/30/2021. There is no guarantee that the 21-22 NYS Budget will give any more funding. Mr. McClement said that he will keep the Board up to date as developments come in. Mr. McClement said that the coffee night at Saratoga Coffee Traders was shut down due to COVID. They have started having Veterans bring their own refreshments and they gather in the parking lot of the Veterans office instead. Mr. McClement said that they will also be partnering with Dr. Prezioso and Office for the Aging to offer an online mental health first aid training.

Mr. Richardson said that he has had a discussion with Mr. McClement and they believe they should postpone the Deceased Veterans Ceremony for the remainder of the year. He is concerned about large gatherings. Mr. Wright suggested that the ceremonies should actually be suspended until further notice. The committee agreed. Mr. McClement suggested that when the program re-opens that it picks up with the Town of Day and follow the list as previously scheduled.

Mr. Richardson said that another item to put on the back burner is the Revolutionary 5K Run in November. There are usually 500-600 participants not counting spectators and volunteers. The committee agreed to postpone the run for this year. Mr. Zlotnick suggested a possible virtual 5K run. Mr. McClement said that instead of doing that, he got a call from John Swedish from Death Wish Coffee. Death Wish Coffee were working on a project to do an archeological dig at the

Battlefield with Veterans. This event was cancelled however part of the event was a mug sale. Custom Death Wish coffee mugs in tribute to the Battle of Saratoga. They would like the Veterans Service Agency to be the beneficiary of the mug sale which could generate upwards of \$20K towards the trust fund. Mr. McClement said that in lieu of a virtual run, they would like to focus their efforts in this mug sale. Mr. Zlotnick suggested reaching out to the past participants of the run regarding the mug sale.

Mr. Richardson said that he discussed van transportation with Mr. McClement. Mr. McClement said that they are currently operating on a case by case basis. The VA has not fully opened up all of their clinics and are mostly seeing critical care patients. As a result, there are sporadic requests for transportation. Mr. McClement said that he would like the approval to designate 2 days a week to run. They are currently down to 1 driver who is on call. This way there is a set schedule to count on and schedule rides. Mr. McClement said that he is also in the process of exploring other transportation options such as Uber and Lyft. At this point, the van can only accommodate approximately 4 people due to social distancing etc. Mr. Barrett inquired about what is done if there is a need for wheelchair access. Mr. McClement said that they currently do not provide that service because the VA does not provide transportation for patients that are ambulatory. If people are wheelchair bound, the VA will step in and assist with transportation. Mr. Barrett said that they have two wheelchair vans and if a driver is needed, he has several that could help out in a pinch.

Mr. Richardson distributed a graphic of the new sign that will be installed at the Veterans office for review by the committee. Mr. McClement said that the cost for the placard will be covered by Peer to Peer funds.

A motion was made by Mr. Pemrick, seconded by Mr. Wright, to authorize a resolution supporting the Commitment to Veterans Support and Outreach Act. Unanimous.

Copies of a draft resolution were distributed. Mr. McClement said that this is an item that was brought up by Mr. Veitch from NACo meetings regarding Federal Funding for County Veterans Service Agencies. Mr. McClement said that there is pending federal legislation that NACo and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers are supporting. Mr. McClement said that a similar resolution was recently passed in Fulton County. Mr. McClement said that they currently do not receive any federal funds.

Mr. McClement said that at the beginning of the year he talked about how they changed the law for the Blue-Water Navy. This Board passed a resolution a few years ago in support of this legislation, the legislation has since passed and we are now beginning to see the benefits of this. Over the last 6 months, they have helped 3 veterans and 1 veterans widow take advantage of this. Their retroactive benefits combined was \$691K.

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Zlotnick, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board

March-August 2020 – Veterans Committee Report

1. Veteran Service Officer Summary Report

- a. 55 New Claims assembled and submitted
- b. 16 In person/ 13 Phone Conducted scheduled appointments
- c. 0 Walk-In clients
- d. 7 DSS Referrals
- e. 10 Medicaid Referrals

During Shut down, over 160 voicemails responded to as well as over 40 email responses.

2. Veterans Events

- a. 3/6 Veterans Legal Clinic NYS Museum
- b. 3/6 VFW 100 Year Celebration
- c. 3/11 Inter-Agency Awareness Day

3. Saratoga County Veterans Transportation

- a. 70 Van transportation provided Rides.

4. Veterans Trust Fund

- a. Balance on hand of \$ 79,550.17

5. Peer to Peer Summary

- a. Coffee Night has been postponed due to COVID-19
- b. 3/5 Comedy Night
- c. 6/23-going forward Tailgate Tuesdays (gathering outside our office, with their own chairs and drinks, complying with the social distancing rules)

6. Honor our Deceased Veterans

- a. Postponed all events indefinitely due to Covid-19

VETERANS TRUST FUND

DATE	TRANSACTION DESCRIPTION	DISBURSEMENTS	DEPOSITS	ACTUAL BALANCE
	MONTH TOTAL: NOVEMBER 2019	\$ -	\$ 8,884.00	\$ 102,948.22
12/2/2019	Hoffman & Miller Oil Co. - Margaret Liburdi Emergency	\$ 488.00		\$ 102,460.22
12/16/2019	Santander Consumer USA - Gene Martin Emergency	\$ 836.00		\$ 101,624.22
12/19/2019	Spirit of Life Church Donation		\$ 300.00	\$ 101,924.22
	MONTH TOTAL: DECEMBER 2019	\$ 1,324.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 101,924.22
12/31/2019	4th Qtr Interest		\$ 12.39	\$ 101,936.61
	2019 5K Run Expenses	\$ 16,192.00		\$ 85,744.61
1/9/2020	Waterford Senior Center		\$ 200.00	\$ 85,944.61
	MONTH TOTAL: JANUARY 2020	\$ 16,192.00	\$ 212.39	\$ 85,944.61
2/5/2020	Carol Barraclough Donation		\$ 50.00	\$ 85,994.61
	MONTH TOTAL: FEBRUARY 2020	\$ -	\$ 50.00	\$ 85,994.61
3/16/2020	Frank McClement - Food pantry items for office	\$ 750.00		\$ 85,244.61
	MONTH TOTAL: MARCH 2020	\$ 750.00	\$ -	\$ 85,244.61
4/2/2020	1st Qtr Interest		\$ 10.56	\$ 85,255.17
4/28/2020	VCHC - Emergency Disbursement	\$ 2,000.00		\$ 83,255.17
4/30/2020	Move \$ per Bd Res 88-2020 due to COVID-19 crisis	\$ 5,000.00		\$ 78,255.17
	MONTH TOTAL: APRIL 2020	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 10.56	\$ 78,255.17
5/21/2020	Waterford Clock - 5K sponsor		\$ 100.00	\$ 78,355.17
	MONTH TOTAL: MAY 2020	\$ -	\$ 100.00	\$ 78,355.17

VETERANS TRUST FUND

DATE	TRANSACTION DESCRIPTION	DISBURSEMENTS	DEPOSITS	ACTUAL BALANCE
6/18/2020	The Oliviere's Donation		\$ 500.00	\$ 78,855.17
	In Memory of Thomas Nadeau		\$ 495.00	\$ 79,350.17
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	MONTH TOTAL: JUNE 2020	\$ -	\$ 995.00	\$ 79,350.17
7/10/2020	In Memory of Thomas Nadeau - Blake/Gainer		\$ 50.00	\$ 79,400.17
	In Memory of Thomas Nadeau - Marie Salvati		\$ 100.00	\$ 79,500.17
	McInerney Donation		\$ 50.00	\$ 79,550.17
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	MONTH TOTAL: JULY 2020	\$ -	\$ 200.00	\$ 79,550.17
TOTALS		\$ 91,787.41	\$ 171,337.58	\$ 79,550.17



National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO)

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Commitment to Veterans Support and Outreach Act (S. 3020/H.R. 5516)

ACTION NEEDED:

House and Senate members are needed to support the Commitment to Veterans Support and Outreach Act (S. 3020/H.R. 5516). This bill will expand community-based outreach that will help veterans access services to improve their health and wellness and prevent suicides.

BACKGROUND:

County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) are local county employees who are nationally accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to prepare, present, and prosecute VA claims. They are often the first point of contact in the community for veteran services because they are the ones who assist veterans and their families by helping them obtain their earned benefits like disability benefits, enrollment in VA health care, VA home loans, education benefits, and job placement. These service services are vital because most veterans are not always aware of the benefits available to them. CVSOs are often the first to inform them of their eligibility.

Despite the important role they play in the veteran community, currently there is no federal funding directly available for CVSOs, or their local equivalents, to support the services they provide. This is especially troubling given that we're in the midst of a suicide crisis that is disproportionately affecting veterans. In fact, 14 of the 20 veterans who die by suicide each day are not utilizing VA care. This national public health crisis requires a national approach that meets veterans where they're located – and the CVSO Act would do just that.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- The CVSO Act would provide \$250M over 5 years to CVSO offices.
- Funding will help CVSOs promote health and wellness through coordination, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive veteran suicide prevention and outreach programs.
- Additional funds will also allow CVSOs hire new or additional staff, train and accredit personnel, and update technology.
- This funding will be used to supplement – not supplant – existing state and local funding that is otherwise available. Passing this bill should not be viewed as a bait and switch.
- The CVSO Act has been sponsored by Sen. Tammy Baldwin in the Senate, and Rep. Mike Levin in the House. It is supported by the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO).